

'He descended into Hell,'

OR AN INTERPRETATION

Based on Reason and Scripture,

AS STATED BY

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"Quis nisi infidelis negaverit fuisse apud inferos Christum!"
(August Epist. 99, Cap. 2.)

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“HE DESCENDED INTO HELL;”

OR, AN INTERPRETATION BASED ON REASON AND SCRIPTURE.

“The significant omissions in the service which struck him, were — the article ‘*He descended into Hell,*’ from the Apostles creed.”

This extract, taken from an English newspaper, sufficiently proves the necessity for vindicating the doctrine contained in the article “He descended into Hell.” The exposition of it given in the following pages is not new, for it is, at least, as old as the article itself—in other words, 1,400 years and more. Nevertheless, it is not now generally received. Nor should it be, if it rested on antiquity alone. But resting, as it does, on reason and scripture, in addition to antiquity, it deserves the serious consideration of all who would know “the certainty of those things wherein they have been instructed.”

The interpretation referred to is that our Saviour’s human soul descended into a state of suffering after death, as distinguished from the *final* state of the lost; or the state of happiness; or the grave.

The generally received opinion supposes Christ’s soul to have gone into that place and state of *rest* where departed spirits go. The interpretation given here, likewise supposes him to have gone to a place and state of departed spirits; but not to a place and state of rest. He (i. e. his disembodied soul,) went to a place in which he remained in a state of suffering until he was released therefrom on the morning of the Resurrection. In support of this interpretation, I observe, first, that there are only two states into which it is possible to enter after death—the one a state of unchangeable happiness; the other a state of unchangeable misery. Both of these states admit of degrees of happiness and misery, respectively; and the final issue of one is the endless misery of the lost in *gehenna*—the final issue of the other is the endless happiness of the blessed in Heaven.—*All* alike, enter into these states immediately after death; *we* shall leave them at the resurrection from the dead.

It may be asked what authority is there for asserting that there are only two states after death? The authority of reason.—for if there be an intermediate state in which happiness and misery co-exist, as on earth, then it is a state of misery. If there be no such state, then there is none other conceivable, for

the only other conceivable state is one in which there would be an absence of both happiness and misery. But this is inconceivable in connection with the immortal spirit, which cannot become unconscious, cannot die. The authority of Scripture confirms the authority of reason, for the Scriptures do not represent the departed spirit as being in an unconscious state after death. On the contrary, they teach us that it increases in knowledge. For example, Abraham is represented as believing what did not happen till long after his death. Viz.: That Moses and the Prophets were written for our learning upon earth; and not only so, but that they were sufficient for our salvation. The Scriptures also uniformly represent the soul as passing immediately from the present state of existence to a future and fixed state of either happiness or misery. See the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke XVI,) and the words, "From henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; even so saith the spirit, for they rest from their labors." Therefore, although there is no intermediate state between the state of happiness and misery, there is an intermediate state of happiness and misery between our earthly state on the one hand and our gehennal and heavenly state, as the case may be, on the other. This, so far at least as I am aware, has never been denied by Christians, nor can it be consistently by any who acknowledge the authority of reason and Scripture. For reason teaches that this intermediate state is not our earthly state, nor yet is it our final state. It differs materially from both in this respect—that this is a disembodied state—but both the extreme states are embodied states. Scripture also confirms this teaching when it says "Death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and Death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire."—Rev. XX, 13 and 14 v. Where I suppose Death refers to the body, and Hell to the soul.

Observe next, that our word *Hell* is the translation of the Greek word *Hades*, and that the Greek word *Hades* is used to denote both of these states (see Ps. 89, 48, Rev. 20, 13.), like the corresponding Hebrew word "*Scheul*," and also our own word *Death*. We speak indiscriminately of the death of the righteous and the death of the wicked. But, in the majority of instances, the word *Hades* is used in a bad sense in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. And it is specially worthy of notice that our Saviour himself invariably uses it in a bad sense, viz.: To denote the *Hades* of suffering. In the following passages it cannot mean anything else: "And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell." (Mat. XI, 23.) "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not

prevail against it." (Mat. 16, 18.) "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." (Luke 16, 23.)

Having thus proved that there are only two states possible after death, and that this word *Hades* is strictly applicable to the state of suffering. I might even go further and say the *place* of suffering, for the idea of place was invariably associated with the word *Hades*. (See Pearson, Art. V.) The next enquiry will be, into which of these two places and states did our Saviour's human soul enter after death? Did he go to the *hades* of rest or the *hades* of unrest? the *hades* of happiness or the *hades* of suffering? If he went to a place of suffering he must have gone to a state of suffering. According to reason and Scripture and, as I believe, the testimony of the Church of England in the Creed, he went to the *hades* of suffering; but before I bring forward direct proof of this position, it may be proper to observe that it is not necessary to a belief of this article to hold this particular interpretation of it. If it be interpreted to mean the *hades* of happiness, it still refers to some *hades*, and this, as I have said, is a legitimate use of the word. Nevertheless, if it be revealed in Scripture that it means the *hades* of suffering it must be profitable for us to know it and in so far as it is profitable, it must be necessary.

I wish to say also that all other interpretations cannot fail to be unsatisfactory to the thoughtful mind. It is alleged, e.g., that it means "He descended into the grave." But did *he* descend into the grave? His body did; but his soul was not buried with his body; and the soul, truly speaking, is the living person, as the conversation of Abraham with the rich man proves. Therefore that is unsatisfactory.

It is said again that it means simply the state of the dead, but this does not solve the difficulty, for the character of the state is not determined thereby. Besides, to say that he descended into the state of the dead, is to say no more than that he died. Whereas, in the Creed, it is distinguished both from the death and the burial. We believe that he was dead and buried, and also that he descended into Hell. So in Scripture it is written "he bowed his head and gave up the Ghost. But it is also written, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell."—Still, therefore, the question remains what is meant by descending into Hell? Consequently that also is unsatisfactory.

Yet, again, it is said that it means "He descended into the place of departed spirits." This interpretation is called by Pearson, the general opinion of the Church, and this, like the preceding, is true—as far as it goes—but it fails to go far enough. It does not determine the character of the state in the place referred to. Is it the place and state of the good

departed spirits, or of the evil? To say in reply that it means simply the place of the departed spirits, is no more satisfactory than to say, It is in America, in answer to the question—Is it in North or South America? or is it in Ireland or England? and it should be said it is in the United Kingdom. It is needless to discuss many other fanciful theories, and among them the theory which identifies Hell with Purgatory; for the doctrine of Purgatory is not only not in accordance with, but directly contrary to many passages of Holy Scripture, particularly the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Lest, however, the simple denial of a doctrine so generally received, should not be considered sufficient, it may be well to add that not only is there no ground for believing that Purgatory is possible in an intermediate and disembodied state, but also in order to establish the doctrine of Purgatory, it is necessary to prove the possibility of passing from the one *disembodied* state to the other. This, however, is impossible, unless our Lord be deceiving us, when he says that between the two there is a great gulf fixed, that the one is afar off from the other, and that they who would pass cannot. (Luke 16, 23, 26.)

Finally, it has been said (by Calvin, according to Pearson,) that it means descent into Hell in the popular sense of the word, and that Christ did really and truly suffer all those pains due to the damed. If this be really Calvin's meaning, which may reasonably be questioned, then, as the Bishop observes, this explication cannot be admitted, partly for the reasons given by himself—chiefly because it is contrary to the teaching of both reason and Scripture—of reason for the state of the damned is an embodied state. (See Mat. X, 28.) “Fear him which able to destroy both soul and body in Hell”; but Christ was in a disembodied state, therefore he could not have been suffering then, at least, all the pains due to the damned—of Scripture also, for Christ is nowhere said to have gone to “gehenna” but to *hades*.

Seeing then that Christ went into some disembodied state—some place of departed spirits—it only remains to discuss the question whether he went into the place or state of the good departed spirits or the evil. My opinion is that he went into the latter state. In order to prove this it will only be *necessary* to prove that he went into a *state* of suffering. It will not be necessary to determine either the degree of suffering to which he was subjected, or the locality where that suffering was endured; if, however, in the course of the argument both these additional points should be decided, it must be confessed that the argument will be so much the stronger. Why then, let me ask, should this interpretation not be received? I know not why,

except for reasons which cannot be sustained. There are, indeed, apparent objections, but to my mind they are only apparent; and my next step will be to endeavor to make this plain to others also. It is objected, e.g., that our Saviour himself said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;" he did, indeed, say so, but it by no means follows that the interpretation usually put upon these words is the correct one. In the first place it is not wholly unworthy of our profession as believers in the Bible to consider the teachings of intuitive theology. Certainly not, when it accords with the analogy of Scripture on any particular point. Now it cannot be denied that we intuitively associate the idea of happiness with an upward direction, and the idea of unhappiness with a downward. I think, also, it is true to say that when we entertain the idea of our Saviour's human soul going into Paradise, we intuitively believe that he ascended and therefore did not descend. In so far then as the usual interpretation agrees with the view that Paradise is above, I believe it to be correct. "The souls of the slain whom St. John saw under the altar," Rev. 6. 9., were surely above and not below; but so far as the usual interpretation makes the words of our Saviour to refer to his human soul, I believe it to be in-correct, for in that case not only will these words disagree with the words of the creed, which say that "he descended," and therefore did not ascend, but also with the words of Scripture, which say the same, "who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.)" Rom. 10, 7. It will not solve the difficulty to say that Christ did both ascend and descend during the interval between death and resurrection—that he existed in two different states—in other words that he passed from the one to the other, for as already quoted, he himself declared that they who would pass from either side cannot.

Our Saviour did indeed say, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise, but in what capacity did he say so? Was he speaking at the time as man or as God? It cannot be denied that he spoke sometimes exclusively as man, viz.: "My Father is greater than I," John 14, 28, "I can of mine own self do nothing," John 5, 30; but sometimes also he spoke exclusively as God, viz., "I and my Father are one," John 10, 30; "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," (John 5, 17) which latter words were understood by the Jews to imply a confession of equality with the father. We find him also on one occasion speaking in such a way as to distinguish between the manhood and Godhead, while at the same time he acknowledged the perfect union of both in his own person. "No man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven,

even the Son of Man—*who is in Heaven*”—accordingly, we are warranted to believe that the son of man was both in Heaven and upon earth at one and the same time, for he who spoke these words was on earth while he spoke them, but he was at the same time in Heaven; as man he was on earth, as God he was both in Heaven and on earth. Seeing then that our Saviour was in the habit of speaking in this way, it is to say the least, not contrary to the analogy of Scripture, to believe that he spoke to the penitent thief as God and not as man, and when we consider the circumstances under which these words were spoken, is it not more agreeable to reason to suppose that he spoke as God and not as man? The dying malefactor had just confessed his faith in the divinity of his dying Saviour. It is the most remarkable example of faith in this truth upon record, and should put to shame the infidelity of Arians, Socinians, &c. That faith was expressed in the rebuke given to his fellow malefactor. “Dost not thou fear *God*, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” It was also breathed in the prayer, “*Lord* remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” It was therefore unquestionably as God, that the thief spoke of and addressed the Saviour in prayer. Can we then have any difficulty in believing that it was as God the Saviour spoke, when he answered that prayer and said, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. To-day shalt thou be with *me*, whom you have confessed before man to be God; whom you have addressed as Lord. I am even now there; to-day shalt thou be *with* me there. Thus we are not only able to reconcile the Creed with the Scripture, but also the Scripture with itself.

It is objected again that our Saviour said, “It is finished,” (John XIX, 30.) But I ask what was finished? Is it said the work of Redemption? Scarcely can this be true, for it is not finished yet. “We wait still for the adoption to wit the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom. 8, 23.) Or is it said—the sufferings?—he had still to die, yet this interpretation might appear admissable, were it not for the context in which the words occur. It must be plain to the most superficial scholar that the words translated ‘accomplished’ and fulfilled in the 28th verse, and the one translated, ‘finished’ in the 30th verse, are from the same root. The two latter evidently refer to one and the same thing; not because I say so, but because our Saviour thirsted, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, and because he said that what happened after he thirsted was the fulfillment of it. (See Ps. 69, 21.) Jesus, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, “I thirst.” They filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his

mouth. When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, "fulfilled;" i. e., the Scripture is fulfilled; or more strictly, perhaps, the action is completed by which the Scripture is fulfilled. For, as Bengel observes, *teleo* is spoken of things, but *teleioo* of the sacred Scriptures. In either case, however, the word refers to the fulfillment of this Scripture; and therefore, although it may be accommodated to other things, it is not true to say that it refers primarily to either the completion of the work of Redemption, or the termination of the Saviour's sufferings.

Once more it is objected that our Saviour said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Hence it is argued that the spirit of Christ must have ascended to his father, for his father is in heaven; but surely the hands of the father, so to speak, can reach even to *hades*. Can we deny the testimony of the Psalmist on this point, when he says, "If I make my bed in Hell, behold thou art there." If he descended into Hell, was there not more need that he should commend his spirit into the hands of his father, than if his spirit had gone to Paradise. So far then from these words militating against this view, they rather establish it.

No other objections occur to me as requiring a special refutation here. Those urged by Pearson against Calvin's view are manifestly irrelevant to this; and therefore I would ask again, why should we not believe this view? If it be replied why should we? Because there is a very strong presumption in favor of its truth. I refer to the concurrent testimony of ecclesiastical history, for the last 1,400 years and more which is compressed into the few words "He descended into Hell." During all that time, that solitary sentence has borne its silent witness to the faith of those who constructed it at the first, and by its continued presence there, it teaches us that not all the spiritual and intellectual might of intervening ages has been able to show sufficient cause for either its modification or rejection. Unless such cause can be shewn, our faith should certainly continue the same as theirs. This, however, is a contingency which, as it has not occurred in the past, so it is not likely to occur in time to come. Many alterations have taken place in liturgies and modes of faith; but as yet, none in this. Many scoffers have arisen who have shot out their arrows in different directions, and one has chosen this for a target, and another that; but among all those who have put forth their puny efforts to undermine the walls of our beleaguered Zion, I do not know that any have been able to shake the foundation of this battlement. I do know that none have been able to overthrow it; still it stands secure and unin-

paired. I will not say, like some projecting promintory, founded by the God of nature, which alike, unmoved and immovable, bids defiance triumphantly to the fury of the restless and ungovernable waves beneath. But this I do say that it is like a fortress built upon that promontory for the preservation of people and land in connection with it. It was built, indeed, by the hand of man, but it rests upon the foundation of God; and if this be so we are sure it will stand yet for many an age, and continue to breast the violence of all opposition. It and the rest of the liturgy will dash back the continually recurring waters of objection in ineffectual foam, and will serve as a lasting memorial, both of the necessity of having such defences as these, and also of the superior skill of those who constructed them at the first.

Such is the nature of the historical presumption in favor of this view—a presumption which might be strengthened if necessary, by a reference to the original Latin of the Creed, which is variously *descendit ad inferos or ad inferna*, and to the derivation of the word *inferi* (see note in Pearson), which means properly “the souls of men in the earth,” not the bodies. It might also be strengthened by the words of the third article of religion—which reiterates the same truth after an interval of several centuries, and reiterates it in such a way as to induce the belief that it was composed expressly with a view to exclude every other interpretation. “As Christ died for us and was buried, so also is it to be believed that he went down into Hell”. The words “as” and “so” teach us that he sustained the same character in what he did after death and what he did before. “For us,” viz.: as our substitute, he died and was buried; “so,” also as our substitute he went down to Hell. In like manner the retention of the words “down” and “Hell” appear to confirm the reality of the intention to retain the same doctrine.

This, however, it will be said, is not proof. Consider, therefore, the following proof from reason and Scripture:—Our blessed Saviour was the sinners substitute. As such it was necessary that he should do and suffer—but especially suffer—in the sinners stead. Not indeed all that the sinner should have suffered, but all that God considered sufficient for a full atonement. The nobility of the victim counterbalanced any deficiency in the kind of the punishment inflicted, or the degree or duration. For this reason it was not necessary that Christ should either obey or suffer eternally. Nothing more is required than fulness of obedience, during the time appointed in each department of action, and I would add in each state of existence. On what grounds can it be

maintained that Christ should not act as the sinners substitute, in every state in which the sinner might be called upon to exist. Why should he not undergo the condition of a dead man as well as of a living? in its fullest sense; in soul as well as in body? If Christ on our behalf passed through the state which precedes our natural birth, and the state which precedes our natural death, why should he not also act for us in the state which precedes our final condemnation. *Apriori* we should be inclined to think that if he came to deliver man from condemnation by taking his place, he should take his place in every stage of existence previous to the date of his final execution. Unless, indeed, it can be proved that *we* could not have committed sin in that disembodied state from which we have been saved by the substitution of our Saviour, and therefore could not have needed a substitute with reference to that state. If in his *foetus* and embodied state he suffered with and for man, why not also in his disembodied state? Else what reason can we give for his "taking man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin." Why pass through this state—or the state of helpless infancy? Why not be created at once in the fulness of manhood?—Why? But because it was necessary as man's substitute that he should be so in every state in which substitution was admissable. Evidently he made himself responsible to suffer in every state in which man made himself liable to suffer, except the last. Else would his substitution have been incomplete. Not only so, but if *as the sinners substitute*, his sufferings terminated in his departure from this world. Is there not ground for the theory that the sufferings of the impenitent likewise terminate at the same time for a period. This, however, is not the case and therefore we argue that if he died as a sinner, it is not reasonable to suppose that he would go after death to any other place than the place where sinners go, and if the place, therefore the state. If he died *for sin*, it is natural to think that he would go after death where they go who die *in sin*. It is certain that his body went where the bodies of sinners go, viz.: the grave; it is natural to suppose, therefore, that his soul went where the souls of sinners go; viz.: the suffering *hades*. The burden of proof lies on those who maintain the contrary. It is far from probable that his body should be treated as the body of a sinner, and his soul as the soul of a saint. How, *in his case*, would it be possible to account for such a difference of treatment? In our case it is plain, by reason of what he has done for us, and *for this very purpose*. But in his case it is different; who could make atonement for *him*? that the

deep should not swallow him up, nor the pit shut her mouth upon him. (Ps. 69, 15.) If, however, it be still supposed that such a difference of treatment did take place, then we ask, why did he die at all? Why was his body not treated in the same way as his soul? Why, if he did go to a *hades* of happiness, was he not translated there in *body* and soul? It will be replied, probably, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, or because, without shedding of blood, there is no remission," and this is true, but for reasons equally strong, it was necessary that he should not only die, but also suffer after death. Was it necessary in the former case that Scripture should be fulfilled—it was equally necessary in the latter. Did the Scriptures foretell the one in type? they foretold the other also. The double captivity of the Patriarch Joseph foreshadowed the double captivity of our Saviour on earth. Joseph in prison represented our Saviour in the confinement of *hades*. Moreover, of all the offerings under the Jewish economy, none was more expressive of the sacrifice of Christ, than the burnt offering. But it was not enough that it should be slain, and that there should be simply a shedding of the blood; surely the shedding of the blood was enough to establish the reality of the death. It was also necessary that after death it should be burned. The spirit of the victim could not be made to suffer or acted upon so as to signify sufferings. In this way, however, there was expressed (the only way in which it could be expressed to the senses,) the truth that the anti-type should continue to suffer after death. Nor was it faintly foreshadowed only in type. It was clearly revealed also in the words, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Ps. 16, 10. We say clearly for God himself applies these words to Christ, and tells us (Acts ii, 31,) that the Psalmist spoke of Christ; that Christ's soul was not left in Hell; neither did his flesh see corruption. Wherefore, God himself teaches us that the Psalms contain passages whose primary reference is to the Psalmist, but whose principal and ultimate reference is to Christ. This cannot be denied, at least with reference to the passage just quoted; and from it alone we may learn that Christ went to the *hades* of suffering; for he went to a *hades* which it was desirable, in his estimation, to leave. Was this then, the *hades* of happiness or the *hades* of pain?

In giving this exposition of the passage, I have argued on the supposition that the ordinary interpretation of its meaning is correct, viz.: That Christ's soul would go into *hades*, but would not be left there, as long as the souls of others. It has been interpreted, however, to mean exactly the opposite, "Thou wilt not leave my soul "to" *hades*, in the sense

of "to go to" *hades*; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption," an interpretation which appears to me to be inadmissible, for whatever may be said about the meaning of the Hebrew prefix being "to" rather than "in." It cannot, I think, mean "to go to," and it seems even to an English reader, that as much is implied under the one clause of the sentence as under the other. The latter clause implies that his body went to the grave, but did not see corruption. So the first clause should signify that his soul went to *hades*, but did not remain there; and this would be implied equally if the words were translated, Thou wilt not leave my soul "to" *hades* as if they were translated, thou wilt not leave my soul "in" *hades*. Independently, however, of all such criticisms as these, I should be content to let the true meaning of the passage be determined by the analogy of the many other passages which *must* be interpreted so as to coincide with the meaning which the ordinary interpretation plainly supports. Thus the 69th Psalm, already quoted, proved to be messianic by our Lord himself, (compare John 19, 28 to 30, with Ps. 69, 21,) and by his disciples who remembered that it was written "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." (Compare John 2, 17, with Psalms 69, 9.) How significant are the words of the 15th verse, "Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me," especially when we couple them with the corresponding words, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. See also Psalms 86, 13,—“Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest Hell.” It will be said, probably, that these words refer only to the Psalmist, and are only figurative; but we should have said the same of the 16th Psalm, if God himself had not interpreted it for us? Why then should not this passage be considered analogous, and interpreted in the same way? Was the Psalmist ever so situated that these words could have been literally fulfilled in him? If it be said that they are applicable to all the saved as well as the Psalmist—for all who are being saved have been delivered from Hell—it will scarcely be maintained that the Psalmist would have gone to the *lowest* Hell; or that all the saved would have gone there if they had not been saved. Again it is written, (Ps. 116, 3,) "the pains of Hell got hold upon me." Respecting which and similar passages, we argue as above. It is only in a very subordinate and figurative sense that they can be applied to the person of the Psalmist; they have an ulterior reference to and receive their final fulfilment in Christ. No mere terrestrial sufferings of mortals could be suitably so described, without such ultimate reference. Therefore, when the Psalmist uses such words, he does so, I

think, as personifying one who literally experienced what he expressed.

In the same way would I interpret the passage in Jonah II, 2, "out of the belly of Hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." It will probably be denied by some that there is any reference here to Christ, but on what grounds? It is true some of the passages in Jonah's prayer are applicable only to himself; but as in the Psalms, is it not also true that some of them are more properly applicable to Christ. Jonah says, for example, "the earth with her bars was about me forever."—Are these words more applicable to Jonah, who was rather surrounded by the waters of the Ocean, and the body of the whale, than by the ribs of the earth. Let it be remembered that the whole transaction was prophetic, and that our Saviour himself recognizes it as such. How is it that those who deny this, so soon forget the words, "There shall no sign be given them but the sign of the prophet Jonah, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Mat. 12, 40.) Here then we have our Saviour's own exposition, from which we learn that "the whale's belly," the belly of Hell (or *hades*), and the heart of the earth, were so intimately associated together in his mind, that he was justified in interpreting what the Prophet prophetically called "the belly of Hell," to mean the heart of the earth. It will be said, of course, in reply, that the heart of the earth means the grave. But does the new tomb "hewn out of the rock" (Mat. 27, 60,)—not even a tomb such as we are in the habit of making—deserve to be called the heart of the earth? Not only so, but the "Son of Man" must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Now, was the Son of Man in the tomb at all; his lifeless body lay there, but not himself, for his departed spirit alone is entitled to that name. This is proved by the Saviour himself, for he called the departed spirits of the patriarchs and their spirits alone, by the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Seeing then that the heart of the earth is not the grave, why should it not be understood in a literal sense? As I have already said, it is not *necessary*, to my purpose, to prove *where* this *hades* of suffering is, yet I cannot refrain from expressing my conviction that its locality is the heart of the earth (See Deut. 32, 22.) (Amos 9, 2.) With this opinion (according to Pearson,) many have coincided in primitive times, and his own testimony respecting it is (when speaking of Eph. 4, 9,) that "this exposition cannot be disproved," (Art. V, 302, 1.) It matters little, however, how many have thought so, unless they have confirmed the teaching of reason and scripture.—

This, however, I think they have done in this instance, for the Prophet Ezekiel 32, 21, seems to teach the same truth in his lamentation for the fall of Egypt. "The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of Hell. * All of them slain, fallen by the sword, whose graves are set in the sides of the pit. * There is Elam and all her multitude, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit." Here the Prophet speaks of the dead. He says the graves of the dead are set in the sides of the pit. If, therefore, the graves are set in the surface of the earth, the surface of the earth must be the sides of the pit. He also says that those of whom he speaks, were in the midst of Hell; were in the pit, and in the nether parts of the earth. In other words, he distinguishes the nether parts of the earth from the grave, and identifies Hell, the pit, and the nether parts of the earth together. In like manner, the apostle speaks of the lower parts of the earth, and (perhaps with reference to this very passage) teaches us plainly that Christ, i. e., his soul, not his body, descended into the lower parts of the earth. Eph. 4, 9. Consequently, according to Ezekiel, he descended also into the pit, and was with the uncircumcised in the midst of Hell or *hades*. It may be objected, indeed, that this phrase, "the lower parts of the earth," is used in Psalms 139, 15, in a different sense. This is true of the primary application, though it must be confessed in a sense very far from literal; but what of the secondary? It has been already proved that God himself established the principle of secondary applications, why then should we not apply the principle here, especially if we could thereby harmonize the meaning of all the passages, in which the word occurs. If the Psalmist had been speaking of himself alone, he, upon earth, would scarcely have said "I was curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth." It must therefore have a reference to some one originally above the earth, viz.: to Christ; and therefore we may regard the Psalmist, I think, when speaking thus of his condition in the womb, as speaking like the Prophet Jonah, prophetically, and as using language whose ultimate reference is to our Saviour's confinement in the womb of our maternal earth. He speaks of himself as being in a state as nearly as possible like a disembodied state; as "being imperfect, as "having yet none of his members," and in the same Psalm we find the words, "If I make my bed in Hell, behold thou art there." Similarly it is said (Ps. 63, 9,) "Those who seek my soul to destroy it (query after having attempted to destroy my body,) shall go into the lower parts of the earth." In confir-

mation of this interpretation see Wordsworth, Acts 2, 24. "As showing that death and the grave instead of being the destruction of Christ, were, by the divine power made, as it were, the womb from which he was to be born to new life. He is called the first-born from the dead (Col. 1, 18, Rev. 1, 5), and to the Christian life is death, and death is birth. To him the darkness of the tomb is the womb of immortality."

Notwithstanding, however, Pearson's admission in favour of this interpretation, he makes an effort to subvert it, which I cannot but characterize as ineffectual. He says we *cannot* be assured that when the Apostle uses the words, "He descended into the lower parts of the earth," (Ep. 4,) he speaks of a descent performed after Christ's death; or even if so, that the lower parts of the earth did signify Hell, or the place where the disembodied souls of men were tormented. But to what other descent *could* these words be referred? and thus I venture to suggest that the impossibility should be removed from where the Bishop places it, to the opposite side; for when did Christ's human soul descend? From what place or to what place did it descend—previous to his death on the cross? I cannot cease to marvel when he says "They may well refer to his incarnation," for if they refer to his incarnation, they must refer to the incarnation of the Godhead only. Christ's divinity may be said by a figure of speech authorized by himself to have descended and become incarnate, but certainly not this humanity. Moreover, the point of the Apostle's argument is the *identity* of the person ascending and descending. See 10th v. "He that ascended is the *same* that descended." To establish, therefore, a reference to the incarnation, it would be necessary to prove that the humanity, *both in body and soul*, descended as well as the divinity, for both body and soul ascended in conjunction with the divinity; and to the humanity, in particular is reference made, when we speak of the ascension. On the other hand refer the passage to the descent into *hades*, and it not only coincides with other passages, but is consistent with itself, for both Christ's body and soul descended, as also they both ascended—the body to one part of the earth, the soul to another. Hence the use of the plural number, "the lower parts of the earth." (See also Elicott in loco.) Turn now to Ac's 2, 24, where it is written "God hath raised him up, having loosed the pains of death." Christ then was loosed from the pains of death, but when? At his death on the cross or at his resurrection? Men say at his death on the cross, but God says at his resurrection. It is written "God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death," consequently he was not loosed from the pains of death until his resurrec-

tion. It is vain to say that God raised him up, after having some time previously loosed the pains of death, viz.: at his death on the cross; for the body only is loosed from pains at death in the case of a sinner, therefore also in the case of one who died as a sinner, unless there is some reason to think that *special* provision has been made for his deliverance. This, however, was not only not the case with the Saviour, as with us, but could not have been, for as was said by some who used words more significant than they were intended to be. "Himself he *cannot* save." Who then could render possible what is impossible with God.

Another passage yet remains which, though not the only remaining one, is, nevertheless, to my mind, the most conclusive. Who shall descend into the deep, i. e., to bring up Christ again from the dead. (Rom. 10, 7.) According to this passage, Christ was among the dead, and those dead were in the "deep," in Greek *abusson* but this *abyss*, is none other than the peculiar abode of devils, for it is written (Luke 8, 31,) the devils besought him that he would not command them to go out into the "deep"—the abyss. The same word is translated in Rev. 9, 1, and other places—the pit—literally the pit of the abyss. Which abyss. (See Wordsworth in loco.) is not the lake of fire; neither is it the final abode of the evil one and of his associate angels; but it signifies his present residence and stronghold. It is certain that Christ's body did not descend into the abyss, therefore if *he* descended his soul must have descended,

I conclude, therefore, that Christ's human soul did literally descend into Hell. Not the place of the finally condemned, but nevertheless a place of suffering called *hades*, and by us translated Hell; and if this be so, we may the better understand the true signification of the words, "I am he that liveth and was *dead*, and behold I am alive for evermore." I was dead, says the Saviour; and what did he mean by the term? Not merely the separation of the soul from the body; but dead in the sense in which they are dead who have begun to die eternally. This is the meaning which our Saviour himself attached to the word whenever he used it, e. g., he said "she is not dead but sleepeth." He thus distinguished between the death of those who had really died, and the sleep of those who have only departed; for it is written they "laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead." Dead the daughter of Jairus undoubtedly was, in one sense of the word, but not dead in the sense in which the Saviour used the term. She was of the number of those who sleep but do not die eternally—in other words suffer the pains of the painful *hades*—pre-

vious to their sufferings in their final state. It may be said the maid was dead, and the Saviour intended to convey that her spirit had returned when he spoke these words. Unfortunately, however, it is expressly stated when her spirit returned (Luke 8, 55,) it was not until after he had spoken these words, and until after he had turned them all out, and went back and took her by the hand and said "*maid, arise.*" Then, but not till then, her spirit returned again, and she arose and ministered unto them.

Again, if this be so, may we not also the better understand the meaning of our Saviour's words *after his resurrection*, "I am not yet ascended unto my Father." If, as is generally supposed, Christ's soul went to the *hades* of happiness, we must then say according to this passage, that the locality of the *hades* of happiness is below and not above, or else we must say that if he were in the *hades* of happiness, between death and resurrection he *did* ascend which would contradict his own words, "I have not yet ascended." We must also say that he did not descend to the deep abyss, which would contradict the Apostle's words, "who shall descend into the deep?" Moreover, if he had ascended he might in that case have said with more propriety. I am lately descended than I am not yet ascended.

Several other passages might be adduced in favor of this view; but enough, I trust, has been said to recommend it at least to the favourable consideration of all. Its great practical importance alone, should suffice to remove the prejudices of those who deny it. This truth, if it be a truth, should serve to inflame our gratitude to Christ, and stimulate our readiness to suffer anything for him, rather than not crucify the flesh and comply with his easy commandments. If it be not a truth, then it is a falsehood favorable to godliness, for was the Saviour indeed delivered to the lowest *hades* for me, and did the pains of *hades* get hold upon him then by this extraordinary mercy of our God, should we not more completely present our bodies a living sacrifice unto him, a holy and acceptable which is indeed our reasonable service. If we fail to do so can we hope that we shall ourselves be spared the pains of the painful *hades*? Unquestionably not, for he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, is not likely to spare us. Nevertheless, let me conclude with the prayer "spare us good Lord, for Jesus' sake."

PEMBROKE, September 5th, 1868.



